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SEPTENNIAL

PARLIAMENTS

JUSTIFIED.

LONDON:

Printed for J. WILKIE, (No. 71,) St. *Paul's Church-yard.* MDCCLXXVI.

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THE importance of the ſubject which the following pages contains, being of ſo very material and eſſential conſequence to every man who has the happineſs to come under the denomination of an Engliſhman, makes it a matter of wonder and aſtoniſhment that it has not before been treated on, and delivered to the public from the preſs by ſome abler hand than that which has now undertaken the taſk.

Though poſſeſſed on this occaſion with a degree of fear, almoſt ſufficient to prevent me from proceeding in this difficult undertaking,

leſt the truth and reaſon of the arguments which I ſhall here ſubmit to the conſideration of the impartial public, may not have ſufficient force to convince them effectually of the juſtice upon which they are founded, yet my own imagination will in ſome meaſure be rendered pleaſing, when I ſhall in future call to my remembrance the circumſtances that occaſioned me to exert the talents and genius with which the great Creator, in his all-wiſe judgment and goodneſs, has been pleaſed to endow me, in attempting to prove ſerviceable to the country in which I live, by drawing away that film which has long clouded the underſtandings of thoſe perſons who might, but have not reflected upon any method of diſentangling themſelves.

The foundations upon which I always have, and ever intend to erect my arguments, are Truth, Reaſon, and Juſtice; and while I remain conſtant to, and do not in any manner ſwerve from, the purſuit of that intention, it will always put me in the poſſeſſion and enjoyment of the ſatisfaction of believing that what I urge is not wrong, though it may not in every inſtance be altogether

gether right; for it muſt not be concluded, that if an argument is not right, it is of courſe totally wrong; becauſe, though it may not in every inſtance be wholly right, yet it may very probably be ſo in part, and therefore cannot be wrong: And indeed it is abſolutely impoſſible that error ſhould poſſeſs the greateſt part of an aſſertion, when truth, reaſon, and juſtice are the pillars by which it is ſupported. But, though there is a very great probability that the judgment may in ſome caſes be deceived and miſled, even when it is founded on the before-mentioned excellent and worthy principles, it may however, and poſſibly will be a means of enlightening the underſtandings of the ignorant, by inducing them to conſider the juſtice and equity of that ſubject, to which they had never before thought proper to pay any attention.

It is a matter of very great concern, when we conſider how few thoſe people are who enter deeply into the merits of thoſe ſubjects which occaſionally come before them.—— The greateſt part of mankind are in general content with receiving the opinions of others, which they no ſooner hear than

adopt, without remembering that they have one of their own; and therefore, ſeldom or ever ſearch into, or conſult it. By this means they concur with their informers in admitting ſuch aſſertions as truth, which are as contrary to it, as the moſt abandoned falſehood can poſſibly be.

If it is in the power of a man to decorate his arguments with the flower of rhetorick, and the beauties of elocution, the multitude imagine that every word which he utters is the reſult of thoughts that proceed from a heart overflowing with ſtrict juſtice and veracity; and, with an eagerneſs difficult to be conceived, they credit all his aſſertions for truth, though in many inſtances they are of a diſtinct nature.

In all countries whoſe government bears a ſimilarity to that of ours, a ſpirit of patriotiſm will always, and undoubtedly ſhould prevail; becauſe it is the only way to diſcover, and make known to the world, the evil practices and intentions (if any) of thoſe perſons who are entruſted with the government. But when there is an opportunity of beholding that ſpirit abuſed, the man who

is vile enough to be the abuſer of it, ought to be held in the moſt deteſted abomination.

It may be daily obſerved, that when an oppoſition to the meaſures of adminiſtration is in agitation, (whether it is proper or not,) if the leading patriot thinks fit to adopt it, all his followers will, with a zeal amounting almoſt to fury, concur with him in his unwarrantable proceedings, and join what power they are poſſeſſed of to effect, as much as they are able, the overthrow of all political meaſures, except thoſe which their own judgments conceive to be proper.

There cannot be a more glaring proof of the abuſe with which the ſpirit of patriotiſm is daily treated, than in that living inſtance who by ſome is called "Our Great City "Patriot"; but who does not deſerve a better name than "The Fomenter of In-"teſtine Broils." He not only oppoſes the meaſures of government when it is proper ſo to do, but even when it is not; and therefore it may very juſtly be concluded, that the guide of his actions is envy. But whatever is the director and chief conductor

tor of his intentions, it is miſtaken by his *noble* and *worthy* colleagues for goodneſs of heart, and a deſire to do well, which their underſtandings are not capable of diſcovering, and therefore they are guided by him in all their purſuits; and whenever he commences hoſtilities againſt the miniſtry, they readily enliſt under his banner, which they eſteem an honourable one. In obedience to his commands they put themſelves in motion; and an imitation of his example is the rule of their actions.

If an examination was made into the foundation of the actions which this hero takes a delight in performing, the contents, upon enquiry, will appear to be, envy, falſehood, and diſhoneſty; and it will be impoſſible to produce one ſingle circumſtance where the dictates of his heart were the reſult of truth, honour, or honeſty; which is a ſufficient proof of, and clearly demonſtrates to an impartial mind, how inſenſibly the ſpirit of patriotiſm gains an aſcendency over the hearts of the leſs-enlightened part of mankind; and how very willing they are to adopt all patriotic ſchemes, whether they are proper or not: and the only reaſon

that can be given for their concurrence in theſe meaſures is, that they eſteem it very warrantable when their leader ſignifies his approbation.

How much deſpiſed ought every man to be, whoſe principal motive for all his actions is ſelf-intereſt! And that man ſhould be abhorred, who, for the ſake of his own private advantage, attempts to diſturb the peace and tranquillity of a nation, by infuſing, to the utmoſt of his power, falſe and miſtaken notions and ideas into the minds of the multitude, whereby they may be inflamed in the greateſt degree againſt the meaſures of adminiſtration; and who thinks that, by this method of proceeding, the government will, through fear of his unwarranted ſlander, be obliged to purchaſe his ſilence at the expence of a penſion.

It is very obſervable, that the weight of duties and taxes is the cauſe of general diſcontent among the lower ſort of people, who take every opportunity to diſclaim againſt the meaſures of government, and are continually diſpleaſed with all their proceedings: but what does this diſpleaſure

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and diſcontent ariſe from, but ignorance? for, when they repine at being aſſeſſed with duties and taxes, they forget that without them no government could be maintained; they forget that it is neceſſary to keep up a force both by ſea and land for the protection of the kingdom and its commerce; and that by means of this force the dignity and honour of the King, his family and counſellors is ſupported; and conſequently, that it is the means of procuring the payment of that reſpect to the nation in general, which, from others, it has a right to demand.

It has been a rule with one of the members for the city (whom it is not neceſſary here to name) annually to make a motion in the Houſe of Commons, to ſhorten the duration of parliaments from the preſent term of ſeven, to the former term of three years, which motion has however been hitherto continually over-ruled: For this reaſon many perſons may think it unneceſſary to preſent to the eye of the public a printed juſtification of Septennial Parliaments, when they ſeem to be ſufficiently juſtified by their continuance. It muſt therefore be obſerved, that the intent of this publication is, not

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only to juſtify them, but to convince that member, and thoſe perſons who ſupport him, that their motives for ſhortening the duration of parliaments are ill-founded; and by this means, to prevent any man from troubling himſelf and the Houſe of Commons, in future, with the propoſition of a motion, which his own judgment will diſcover to be improper.

Parliaments were, from the reign of Edward the IVth to that of Henry the VIIIth, uſually held annually; but it muſt appear very ſtriking to the intelligent part of mankind, that the troubles and confuſion which ſuch frequent elections muſt unavoidably create in a nation, are alone ſufficient reaſons for lengthening their duration.

If in times paſt the people were aſſembled with an equal degree of facility to which they are at preſent, (and of which there is not the leaſt doubt,) the very great loſs that muſt have been occaſioned both of time and labour in the exerciſe of all manual occupations, during the election, would in all probability, (had they continued,) have proved very detrimental to the in-

tereſt and wealth of the kingdom, if not have involved it in irretrieveable ruin and deſtruction.—The buſineſs of elections would then have attracted the attention of the ignorant multitude to ſo great a degree, that it would not have permitted them to remember they had any other employ, and both their families and themſelves would be deprived of the neceſſaries of life, and probably be obliged to ſubmit to the moſt diſtreſſing poverty, becauſe their folly, and deſire of popularity induced them to waſte both their time and their money, in being buſied on ſuch occaſions.

Conteſted elections would then ſeldom, if ever, be determined before it would be neceſſary to chooſe another parliament; ſo that the members muſt not, as they are at preſent, be ſo particularly delicate concerning the validity of each others votes, or otherwiſe, in many inſtances, the parliament would not be able to aſſemble themſelves to do any other buſineſs, than to try the ſeveral points in conteſted elections; and therefore, every man muſt think, that the longer continuance of parliaments is not only proper, according to the political ſyſtem, but

alſo according to the ſtrict rules of juſtice and equity.

In the reign of Henry the VIIIth, through the influence of Cardinal Wolſey, a parliament was held but once in fourteen years. This term, every man will undoubtedly think of too long continuance; but then we muſt remember, that it was upon a very particular occaſion that this term was encreaſed to ſo enormous a length, which was, to attaint the Duke of Buckingham.

Many perſons have aſſerted, that this long duration of the parliament was founded on the moſt violent injuſtice; for they ſay, that king Henry the VIIIth was a prince of very unruly appetites, and of an arbibrary will; that he was impatient of every reſtraint; and that both the laws of God and man fell equally a ſacrifice, when they ſtood in the way of his inſatiable avarice, or diſappointed his towering ambition: he therefore (ſay they) introduced long parliaments, becauſe he very well knew, that they would become the proper inſtruments of both.

It may plainly be perceived, that this aſſertion is framed by an evil and malevolent ſpirit, who would take every opportunity of expoſing the vices of a monarch, and at the ſame time conceal, as much as poſſible, the beauties of his virtues.

It has been generally underſtood, that king Henry the VIIIth was a man who poſſeſſed a very unlimitted ſhare of wiſdom; and if he really did, it is not probable that he would make ſuch a uſe of it, as might in the leaſt manner tend to an impeachment of his underſtanding, by endeavouring to exert an authority, which he very well knew did not belong to him: But, even ſuppoſing that he did vary from the character of a wiſe man, and entertained evil intentions, which he wiſhed to ſee executed, it was utterly impoſſible to gratify thoſe deſigns without the concurrence of his parliament; and how can it be imagined, that the majority of a parliament ſhould coincide in, and adopt ſuch meaſures, which their own judgments would condemn as injurious, merely becauſe the monarch propoſed them?

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In this country, it muſt be imagined that every man entertains a very high ſenſe of liberty; and therefore, it cannot be ſuppoſed by any man, who poſſeſſes the uſe of his faculties, that a parliament would give their general aſſent to any law that tended, in the ſmalleſt degree, to be the cauſe of enſlaving that liberty.

It was ordained and enacted in the 16th of Charles I, and the 8th of William and Mary, That the ſitting and holding of parliaments ſhould not be diſcontinued above three years; and that new parliaments ſhould be choſen once in three years; and no parliaments continue longer than that time. This term muſt certainly be allowed to be a more beneficial one than yearly, if no other argument could be produced in its favour, than that it prevents the continued trouble and confuſion, which muſt be the conſequent attendant on annual elections.

It has been urged in favour of triennial parliaments, that ancient uſage has given the people an unqueſtionable right to frequent new parliaments, and that this uſage has been by our anceſtors progreſſively con-

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firmed by ſeveral laws, as often as they found it neceſſary to inſiſt on this eſſential privilege.

In anſwer to this aſſertion, it muſt be obſerved, that the ſame right which our anceſtors poſſeſſed, is inherent in us, as deſcending from them; and therefore, we have the power of altering or repealing thoſe laws which their wiſdom directed them to make, whenever they are found to be improper, and of ſubſtituting others in their ſtead.

Thoſe perſons who hold forth the foregoing argument, muſt entertain a very high opinion of the infallibility of our anceſtors, and as low a one of us of the preſent generation; becauſe they thereby imagine that we are bound to ſubmit to thoſe laws, which men at the diſtance of two or three hundred years thought proper to make, whether they are ſuitable to the preſent times, or not.

If the parliament is not to maintain a poſſeſſion of the power of altering the laws

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of our forefathers, it may as well be deprived of the right of making new ones; becauſe, in many inſtances, the new laws entirely overturn thoſe made in ancient times; and if this was the ſituation of our parliament, the nation would be equally protected and regulated without any, as by one of this nature, and then the whole power would devolve to the King, who would thereby become an abſolute monarch.

Every act that is paſſed into a law by the concurrence of the three eſtates in parliament, ought to be conſidered as abſolutely neceſſary for the intereſt of the nation; and therefore it ſhould not be doubted, but that juſtice and equity were the dictators of it.

It has been further urged in favour of triennial parliaments, that at the time of the Revolution, the people made a freſh claim of the ancient privilege of ſhort parliaments; and that it was then declared, they ſhould be held frequently: and it is alledged, that the full meaning of the people was not ſufficiently underſtood by this declaration; and therefore, as in every new ſettlement the intention of all the parties

ſhould

ſhould be ſpecifically manifeſted, the parliament never ceaſed ſtruggling with the crown, till the triennial law was obtained; and it is apprehended, that though this law did not immediately take place at the time of the Revolution, yet it was certainly intended as declaratory of their firſt meaning; and therefore, that it ſtands a part of that original contract, under which the conſtituon was then ſettled.

It is alſo urged, that the manner in which the ſeptennial law was firſt introduced, is a very ſtrong reaſon why it ſhould be repealed; for it was intended only (ſay the oppoſers of it) as a preſervative againſt a temporary inconvenience, which inconvenience is removed, but the miſchievous effects (ſay they) ſtill continue.

Theſe ſeveral before-ſtated arguments in favour of Triennial Parliaments, do not ſtand in need of any other anſwer, or can be better refuted, than by obſerving, that, as the parliament has thought proper thus long to continue the Septennial law in force, it muſt be ſuppoſed that the majority of the members have always been convinced of

its utility, and that it has been found beneficial to the nation; becauſe, (though many people do,) yet ſuch a cenſure ought not to be paſſed on the majority of the Houſe of Commons, as to imagine, that their minds are ſo incurably corrupted as to induce them to continue any law in force longer, than they are ſatisfied it will be beneficial to the kingdom.

The ſons of faction and ſedition aſſert, that bribery at elections was invented and ſet on foot by wicked and corrupt miniſters, who have, from time to time, led weak princes into ſuch deſtructive meaſures, that they did not dare to rely on the natural repreſentation of the people; and they ſay, that country gentlemen are certain of being choſen without it. And if (add they) a miniſter ſhould ever gain a corrupt familiarity with our boroughs; if he ſhould keep a regiſter of them in his cloſet, and by ſending down his treaſury-mandates ſhould procure a ſpurious repreſentative of the people, the offspring of his corruption, who will be at all times ready to reconcile and juſtify the moſt contradictory meaſures of

adminiſtration, and even to vote every crude indigeſted dream of their patron into a law; if the maintenance of his power ſhould become the ſole object of their attention; and they ſhould be guilty of the moſt violent breach of parliamentary truſt, by giving the King a diſcretionary liberty of taxing the people, without limitation or controul—if this ſhould ever be the unhappy condition of the nation, (they alledge,) the people indeed may complain, but the doors of the place, where their complaints ſhould be heard, will for ever be ſhut againſt them.

The concluſion to the foregoing ideal obſervations muſt undoubtedly be allowed to be very juſtly drawn; and it does not require one moment's heſitation to ſay, that if thoſe imaginary circumſtances ſhould ever happen, the complaints of the people will be treated in the manner therein mentioned; but there is no reaſon to fear that they ever will come to paſs, and it is to be ſincerely hoped, they will not.

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While the preſent miniſter preſides at the head of adminiſtration, it need not be feared that any meaſures will be taken, but ſuch as are for the welfare of the nation; and it is very improbable that a man, whoſe private life is adorned with the moſt diſtinguiſhed virtues, and who has ever maintained the exalted character of a ſenſible, affectionate, honeſt, virtuous, good, and juſt man, ſhould in any degree act contrary thereto in his public capacity, by endeavouring to procure ſuch meaſures to be put in execution, whereby the kingdom might be involved in deſtruction.

His Majeſty's good ſenſe was never made more conſpicuous, than when he choſe the preſent prime-miniſter; and there is no cauſe to imagine, that either his Majeſty's judgment decreaſes from its former ſtrength, or that the miniſter's goodneſs of heart and underſtanding is in the leaſt degree depraved, or annihilated; becauſe if it had, he would not thus long have enjoyed the ſmiles of his affectionate ſovereign, or have been permitted, by him, to have continued ſo long the director of the national affairs;

and he is the moſt juſt pattern that can poſſibly be recommended for the example of thoſe, whoſe good fortune may hereafter place them in that ſtation, which he now honours and enjoys.

The city patriots may diſperſe all the virulent cenſure on his character, which their malice can frame or invent; but while he continues to make the good uſe of his excellent qualities he has hitherto done, he is the fitteſt perſon to direct the helm of that ſtate he now has the honour to guide: and he will then always be far beyond the reach of their injurious attacks; the deſigners of which deſerve to be deſpiſed for their ſlander, and abominated for their envy.

Virtue and fidelity are the moſt permanent ſupporters of the character of every man, and by theſe has the preſent miniſter been upheld; which, had he not poſſeſſed, he would, like many others, have been overwhelmed by the poiſonous breath of malice, clamour, and tumult.

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The late lord Lyttelton, in a ſpeech which he delivered in parliament upon ſome particular occaſion, took an opportunity of ſetting forth the beauties of a good government, and the requiſites for a wiſe miniſter; in which the character and actions of the preſent prime miniſter are ſo admirably delineated, that it is imagined, the inſertion of the paſſage will not be diſagreeable. " Reſolution and ſteadineſs (ſays he) " are excellent qualities; but it is " the application of them upon which their " value depends. A wiſe government will " know where to yield, and where to reſiſt; " and there is no ſurer mark of littleneſs " of mind in an adminiſtration, than ob- " ſtinacy in trifles. Public wiſdom, on ſome " occaſions, muſt give way to popular folly, " eſpecially in a free country, where the " humour of the people muſt be conſidered " as attentively, as the humour of a King " in an abſolute monarchy. Under both " forms of government, a prudent and " honeſt miniſter will indulge a ſmall folly, " and will reſiſt a great one. Not to vouch- " ſafe now and then a kind indulgence to " the former, would diſcover an ignorance

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" of human nature; not to reſiſt the latter " at all times, would be meanneſs and " ſervility."

In the foregoing part of this treatiſe, the ill effects that are particularly attendant on ſhort parliaments have been ſhewn as clearly as poſſible; under which head I have been conſidering Annual and Triennial Parliaments; wherein the negative part of the ſubject has been demonſtrated in the moſt conſpicuous manner—the poſitive ends of which are, to prove that Septennial Parliaments are more advantageous and beneficial than either Annual or Triennial; in ſupport of which, ſuch arguments will be produced, as will be ſufficient to convince every unprejudiced man of their utility and benefit.

It muſt be obſerved, that many perſons have argued againſt Septennial Parliaments with ſome ſucceſs; but then they all ſeem to entertain very miſtaken ideas of the nature of our conſtitution.

It is true that our government is a mixed one, and the perfection of our conſtitution conſiſts in this, that the monarchical, ariſtocratical, and democratical forms of government are mixed and blended together ſo judiciouſly in ours, that we are rendered all the advantages of each, without being made ſubject to the dangers of either.

In monarchies, all the ſinews of government are knit and interwoven, and being united in the hand of the Prince, thereby become the moſt powerful of any; but then, there is very imminent danger of his employing that ſtrength to imprudent, or oppreſſive purpoſes.

There is more wiſdom to be found in an ariſtocratical, than in the other forms of government, on account of its being compoſed, or intended to be compoſed, of the moſt experienced citizens; but there is leſs honeſty than in a republick, and leſs ſtrength than in a monarchy.

In democracies, where the right of making laws reſides in the people at large, pub-

lic virtue or goodneſs of intention is more likely to be found than in the other modes of government. Popular aſſemblies generally mean to do that which is right and juſt, though they are frequently miſtaken in their contrivance, and weak in their execution.

Democracies are the beſt calculated to direct the end of a law; ariſtocracies to invent the means by which that end ſhall be obtained; and Monarchies, to carry thoſe means into execution.

The democratical form of government appears therefore, from the foregoing obſervations, to labour under the following inconveniencies.—That they are generally too tedious in their coming to reſolutions, and ſeldom briſk and expeditious enough in carrying them into execution:—That they are always wavering in their determinations, and never ſteady in any of the meaſures they reſolve to purſue: and—That they are often involved in factions, ſeditions, and inſurrections, which expoſe them to be made not only the tools, but frequently the prey

prey of their neighbours: It is therefore neceſſary in all the regulations to be made with reſpect to our conſtitution, to take particular care to guard againſt running too much into that form of government which is properly called Democratical. The Triennial Law, it is certain, produced this effect; and, if ever it ſhould be reſtored, it will again be the cauſe of it.

It is very evident, that Triennial Parliaments would make our government too tedious in all their reſolves; becauſe, in ſuch caſe, no prudent adminiſtration would ever reſolve upon any meaſure of conſequence, till they had felt, not only the pulſe of the parliament, but alſo that of the people; and the miniſters of ſtate would always labour under this diſadvantage, that as ſecrets of ſtate muſt not be immediately divulged, their enemies (and enemies they always will have) would have a handle for expoſing their meaſures, and rendering them diſagreeable to the people; and by this means be enabled perhaps to carry a new election againſt them, before they could poſſibly have

an opportunity of juſtifying their meaſures, by making public thoſe facts and circumſtances from whence the juſtice, equity, and wiſdom of them would clearly appear.

It is very well known by experience, that what is called the populace in every country are, on the one hand, apt to be, and moſt commonly are too much elated with ſucceſs; and on the other, to be too much dejected with misfortunes. This cauſes them to waver in their opinions concerning the affairs of the ſtate, and prevents them from continuing long in the ſame mind; and as the Houſe of Commons is choſen by the free and unbiaſſed voice of the people in general, if this choice were too often renewed, it might be expected that the Houſe would be as wavering and unſteady as the people uſually are.

Every man knows, that it is impoſſible to carry on the buſineſs of the nation without the concurrence of the Houſe of Commons: the miniſters would therefore be always obliged to comply with every change in their proceedings, and in conſequence thereof, muſt be under the neceſſity of changing

changing their meaſures as often as the people altered their minds.

The enormous expences that are created by new elections, and the ſtagnation which is in ſome degree put to the exerciſe of trade on thoſe occaſions, muſt, if frequently repeated, prove very detrimental to the intereſt and commerce of the nation.

By Septennial Parliaments the nation is prevented from being expoſed to any of theſe misfortunes; becauſe, if the miniſters, after having felt the pulſe of the parliament, reſolve upon any meaſures, they have generally time enough before the new election's come on, to give the people a proper information, in order to ſhew them the juſtice and wiſdom of the meaſures they have purſued. And if the people ſhould at any time be too much elated, or too much dejected, or ſhould without a cauſe change their minds, thoſe at the helm of affairs have time to ſet them right before a new election comes on; and by Septennial Elections the expences incurred do not amount to half thoſe ſums that muſt unavoidably be expended on Triennial Elections.

As to faction and ſedition it may be granted, that in monarchical and ariſtocratical governments it generally ariſes from oppreſſion and violence; but in democratical governments it always ariſes from the peoples' having too great a ſhare in the government; for in all countries, and in all governments, there will be many factious and unquiet ſpirits, who can never be at reſt either in or out of power: when in power they are never eaſy, unleſs every man ſubmits entirely to their direction; and when out of power, they are always working and intriguing againſt thoſe who are in, without any regard either to juſtice or the intereſt of their country. In popular governments ſuch men have too much game: they have too many opportunities for working upon and corrupting the minds of the people, in order to ſtamp a bad impreſſion of, and to raiſe diſcontents againſt thoſe that have the management of the public affairs for the time, and theſe diſcontents often break out into ſeditions and inſurrections.

This would be our misfortune if our parliaments were either Annual or Triennial; becauſe, by ſuch frequent elections, there would

would be ſo much power thrown into the hands of the people, as would deſtroy that equal mixture, which is the very eſſence and beauty of our conſtitution: In ſhort, our government would then really become a democratical one, and might from thence very probably diverge into a tyrannical. Therefore, in order to preſerve and keep inviolate the excellence of our conſtitution, in order to prevent the uſurpation of tyranny and arbitrary power, that law ought to be preſerved which has been the means of bringing our conſtitution to a more equal mixture, and conſequently to a greater perfection than it ever arrived at before that law took place.

If it were poſſible to influence, by ſuch baſe means as thoſe of bribery and corruption, the majority of the electors of *Great-Britain* to chuſe ſuch men as would probably give up their liberties; if it were poſſible to influence, by ſuch means, a majority of the members of the Houſe of Commons to conſent to the eſtabliſhment of arbitrary power; it might be readily allowed that the calculations made on this head, by thoſe who wiſh to introduce Triennial Parliaments, were juſt,

juſt, and their inferences true; but it is to be ſuppoſed, that neither of theſe is poſſible.

As the members of the Houſe of Commons generally are, and always ſhould be, gentlemen of fortune and figure in their country; is it poſſible to ſuppoſe, that any of them could, by a penſion or a poſt, be influenced to conſent to the overthrow of our conſtitution, by which the enjoyment, not only of what he got, but alſo of that which he before poſſeſſed, would be rendered altogether precarious? It may be allowed, that, with reſpect to bribery, the price muſt be higher or lower generally in proportion to the virtue of the man who is to be bribed; but it muſt alſo be granted, that the humour he happens to be in at the time, the ſpirit he happens to be endowed with, adds a great deal to his virtue.

When no encroachments are made upon the rights of the people, when the people do not imagine themſelves to be in any danger, there may be many of the electors who, by a bribe of ten guineas, might be induced to vote for one candidate rather than

than another: but if the court were making any encroachments upon the rights of the people, a proper ſpirit would without doubt ariſe in the nation; and in ſuch a caſe it is certain that none, or very few even of ſuch electors, would be induced to vote for a court candidate—no, not for twenty times the ſum.

There may undoubtedly be ſome bribery and corruption in the nation, it is to be feared there will always be ſome; but it is no proof of it, that ſtrangers are ſometimes choſen: for a gentleman may often have ſo much natural influence over a borough in his neighbonrhood, as to be able to prevail with them to chuſe any perſon he pleaſes to recommend; and if, upon ſuch recommendation, they chuſe one or two of his friends, who are perhaps ſtrangers to them, it is not from thence to be inferred, that the two ſtrangers were choſen their members by the means of bribery and corruption.

It is a matter of aſtoniſhment that bribery and corruption are ſo very prevalent as late experience has teſtified, ſince the par-

liament have provided ſo wholeſome and juſt a law to operate upon theſe occaſions.

It is inſinuated, and taken for granted by many perſons, that money is iſſued from the public treaſury for bribing at elections; which is ſomething extraordinary, eſpecially in thoſe gentlemen who know how many checks there are upon every ſhilling that can be iſſued from thence, and how regularly the money granted in one year for the public ſervice of the nation muſt be always accounted for the very next ſeſſion of parliament, in the Houſe of Commons, and likewiſe in that of the Lords, if they think it neceſſary to call for any ſuch account.

There is no greater ſign of a bad cauſe, than when the ſupporters of it are reduced to the neceſſity of making uſe of the moſt wicked artifices to maintain it. Of this kind are the falſehoods and calumnies which are invented and ſpread abroad by the enemies to our King and country. This ſpirit of malice and ſlander does not diſcover itſelf in any inſtances ſo ridiculous as thoſe, by which ſeditious men endeavour to call in queſtion the ſupremacy of the Britiſh Parliament,

liament, and their undoubted right to enact ſuch laws, as they in their wiſdom ſee fit and proper, and by this means to depreciate the benefits that ariſe from Septennial Parliaments.

It has been urged by theſe calumniators, that gentlemen in offices have very great advantages over country gentlemen, by having ſomething elſe to depend on, beſides their own private fortunes. If they have any advantages of this nature, it muſt be allowed that they have many diſadvantages: they are obliged to reſide here in *London* with their families, which occaſions them to be put to a much greater expence than gentlemen of equal fortunes who reſide in the country; this alſo lays them under a very great diſadvantage with reſpect to the maintenance of their intereſt in the country.

The country gentleman by living among the electors, and purchaſing the neceſſaries for his family from them, keeps up an acquaintance and correſpondence with them, without putting himſelf to any extraordinary charge: whereas a gentleman who

lives in *London*, has no way of keeping up an acquaintance or correſpondence among his friends in the country, but by going down once or twice a year at a very extraordinary expence, and often without any other buſineſs. So that it may be concluded, that a gentleman in office cannot, even in ſeven years, ſave much to diſtribute in ready money at the time of an election; and, if the fact was narrowly enquired into, it would appear that the gentlemen in office are as little guilty of bribing their electors with ready money, as any other ſet of gentlemen in the kingdom.

That there are frequent ferments often raiſing among the people without any juſt cauſe, is what every man muſt be ſurprized to hear controverted, ſince experience muſt convince us of the contrary. Circumſtances of this nature that have lately happened, it is not neceſſary here to enumerate; but do we not know what a ferment was raiſed in the nation towards the latter end of the reign of Queen *Anne?* And it is well known what a fatal change in the national affairs was introduced, or at leaſt con-

confirmed, by the coming on of an election while that ferment was raiſing.

Do we not alſo know, that a ferment was raiſed ſoon after the acceſſion of his late Majeſty *George* the Iſt? and if an election had then been allowed to come on, while the nation was in that ferment, it might perhaps have had as fatal effects as the former; but this was wiſely provided againſt by that law which is here endeavoured to be juſtified, and which, nevertheleſs, many people wiſh to be repealed.

It is impoſſible upon this occaſion to conclude, without taking notice of one of the particular inſtructions which the electors of the county of *Middleſex*, in their late unwarranted aſſembly, gave their repreſentatives. This inſtruction enjoined them to obtain, if poſſible, the repeal of the Septennial act, and to introduce in its ſtead the Triennial. They ſay in theſe inſtructions, (which their repreſentatives have promiſed implicitly to comply with,) that the Septennial act has been the principal cauſe of their [ſuppoſed] grievances, and of the preſent diſpute between *Great-Britain* and her Colonies;

Colonies; a reconciliation between whom, they endeavour, by their late proceedings, to make as far diſtant as poſſible, inſtead of contributing every means in their power to obtain it, which, as good ſubjects, they are bound and ought to do.

As it may be therefore ſuppoſed, that a motion will be again made in the preſent ſeſſion of parliament, to obtain a repeal of the Septennial Act, it muſt be wiſhed, that every candid and impartial man will, when he has read the foregoing arguments, join in thinking, that frequent elections will always be dangerous; and will therefore exert both his intereſt and abilities in preventing thoſe deſtructive and alarming conſequences, which would unavoidably be occaſioned by the repeal of the Septennial Act.

THE END.